

2.0 DOWNTOWN PLAN OVERVIEW

2.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to provide the reader with a brief overview of the elements of this Specific Plan. While following chapters of this Plan provide specific detail with regards to land use, urban design, transportation and implementation, this chapter synthesizes the major points of each of the elements and describes the major concepts involved in the Plan to revitalize downtown Belmont. The last section of this chapter contains a summary of each of the goals and objectives of this Plan to "set the stage" for each of the following elements.

2.2 ROLE OF THE DOWNTOWN

Downtown Belmont today looks remarkably similar to the Downtown Belmont of 20 or 30 years ago. The City's traditional Central Business District contains a wide range of loosely scattered commercial, office and residential uses centered on the major roadway corridors of El Camino Real and Ralston Avenue. The "commercial strip" appearance of Belmont is characteristic of much of the El Camino Real corridor, but the general consensus of Belmont's residents is that they want something better, something unique which can provide a "sense of place" for their downtown.

2.3 THE COMMUNITY'S DESIRE FOR CHANGE DOWNTOWN

The process for planning for Downtown Belmont began in March 1986 when the City of Belmont decided that its citizens must be involved in the future of Downtown. Instead of using the traditional, reactive form of public involvement in which a plan is developed independent of the community and later presented to the community for evaluation, a unique approach was used. The City held three workshops which were attended by well over a hundred people. Citizens went out on a walking and bus tour of Downtown and evaluated what should be preserved and what should be changed. They then worked in small groups to identify issues and the kinds of changes they would like to see. The workshops identified the major issues that Downtown planning should address and a strong consensus that change was needed in the Downtown. At these workshops, citizens developed the following desires for Downtown planning.

1) Image:

The scale and image of Downtown Belmont should reflect a smaller, village-like character and a strong relationship to the tree covered hills.